

***Amendments to the Claims***

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Previously Presented) A method for approving a security change for a file security system that secures electronic files, comprising:

receiving a request for the security change from a requestor, the security change being used for determining access rights to an electronic file;

identifying a plurality of approvers to approve or disapprove of the requested security change by accessing an approver set in an approval manager module;

notifying the approvers of an approval request for the requested security to change;

determining whether the requested security change is approved based on responses from the approvers to the approval request; and

performing the requested security change when said determining determines that the requested security change has been approved.

2. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said notifying of the approvers is achieved by electronic mail.

3. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the responses from the approval group are provided as electronic mail.

4. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein no one of the plurality of approvers can individually approve the requested security change.

5. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers are arranged as a set or group.

6. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers are arranged in a plurality of sets or groups, and wherein said determining requires approval from more than one of the plurality of sets or groups in order to determine that the requested security change is approved.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the plurality of sets or groups are arranged in a hierarchy, and wherein progression to a next level in the hierarchy requires approval from the set or group associated with a current level.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers are users of the file security system.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers form a set of approvers, and wherein said determining determines that the requested security change is approved when a subset of the set of approvers approve the requested security change.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers identified by said identifying is dependent on the requested security change.

11. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of approvers identified by said identifying is dependent on the requestor.

12. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said notifying operates to substantially simultaneously notify all of the approvers of the approval request for the requested security change.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said notifying operates to substantially concurrently notify all of the approvers of the approval request for the requested security change.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the electronic files secured by the file security system are electronic documents.

15. (Previously Presented) A file security system that restricts access to secured electronic documents, comprising:

an access server that restricts access to the secured electronic documents; and

an approval manager operatively connected to said access server, wherein said approval manager operates a security change approval process to determine whether a requested security change is approved, the security change being used for determining access rights to the secured electronic documents,

wherein, in operating the security change approval process, a plurality of approvers are notified of the requested security change and asked to approve or disapprove the requested security change, the plurality of approvers identified by accessing an approver set in an approval manager.

16. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein said file security system has one or more system administrators, and wherein said approval manager operates the security change approval process without any interaction from the one or more system administrators.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the plurality of approvers are notified by notification electronic mail messages.

19. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 18, wherein the plurality of approvers approve or disapprove the requested security change using reply electronic mail messages.

20. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 19, wherein the reply electronic mail messages include a digital signature of the associated approver to verify authenticity.

21. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein no one of the approvers can individually approve the requested security change.

22. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the plurality of approvers are arranged as a set or group.

23. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the plurality of approvers are arranged into a plurality of sets or groups, and wherein said approval manager requires approval from more than one of the plurality of sets or groups in order to determine that the requested security change is approved.

24. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the plurality of sets or groups are arranged in a hierarchy, and wherein progression to a next level in the hierarchy requires approval from the set or group associated with a current level.

25. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the approvers are users of the file security system.

26. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein the plurality of approvers form a set of approvers, and wherein said approval manager determines that the requested security change is approved when a subset of the set of approvers approve the requested security change.

27. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein said approval manager identifies the plurality of approvers dependent on the requested security change.

28. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein said approval manager identifies the plurality of approvers dependent on the requestor.

29. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 15, wherein said file security system further comprises:

a key store operatively connected to said access server, said key store stores cryptographic keys used to gain access to the secured electronic documents.

30. (Previously Presented) A tangible data storage device including at least computer program code for approving a security change for a file security system that secures electronic files, the security change being used for determining access rights to one of the electronic files, comprising:

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computer program code for notifying a plurality of approvers of an approval request for the requested security change, the plurality of approvers identified by accessing an approver set in an approval manager module;

computer program code for determining whether the requested security change is approved based on responses from the approvers to the approval request; and

computer program code for performing the requested security change when said determining determines that the requested security change has been approved.

31. (Previously Presented) The data storage device as recited in claim 30, wherein said notifying of the approvers is achieved by electronic mail.

32. (Previously Presented) The data storage device as recited in claim 31, wherein the responses from the approval group are electronic mail.

33. (Previously Presented) The data storage device as recited in claim 30, wherein no one of the plurality of approvers can individually approve the requested security change.

34. (Previously Presented) A method for approving a security change for a file security system that secures an electronic file, comprising:

receiving a security change request from a requestor, the security change being used for determining access rights to the electronic file;

determining whether the requestor is authorized to perform the requested security change;

receiving an approval request from the requestor, if the requestor is not authorized to perform the requested security change;

based on the receipt of the approval request, performing the steps of:

identifying one or more approvers to approve or disapprove of the requested security change;

notifying the one or more approvers of an approval request for the requested security to change; and

determining whether the requested security change is approved based on responses from the one or more approvers to the approval request; and

performing the requested security change when the first determining step determines that the requestor is authorized to perform the requested security change, or when the second determining step determines that the requested security change has been approved.

35. (Previously Presented) A file security system that restricts access to a secured electronic document, comprising:

an access server that restricts access to the secured electronic document; and

an approval manager module operatively connected to said access server, wherein said approval manager module determines whether a security change is authorized, the security change being used for determining access rights to the secured electronic



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document, and, if not, operates a security change approval process upon receipt of an approval request to determine whether a requested security change is approved.

36. (Previously Presented) A tangible data storage device including at least computer program code for approving a security change for a file security system that secures an electronic file, comprising:

computer program code for determining whether the requested security change is authorized, the security change being used for determining access rights to the electronic file;

computer program code for notifying one or more approvers of an approval request for the requested security change, if the requested security change is not authorized and an approval request is received;

computer program code for determining whether the requested security change is approved based on responses from the one or more approvers to the approval request; and

computer program code for performing the requested security change when said first determining determines that the requested security change is authorized or said second determining determines that the requested security change has been approved.